It consists of a large hole in the form of a truncated cone. The diameter of the upper part varies from 60 to 70 centimeters, that of the lower part from 20 to 30 centimeters, and the depth varies from 60 to 80 centimeters. The bottom and sides are lined with pieces of raffia stems, placed [133] [Fig. 80 appears here] [139] side by side with their rounded surfaces facing the interior of the pit. The nuts, which have been slightly boiled, are poured into this funnel, which serves as a mortar. The outer part is separated from the nut with a large wooden pestle. The kernels are discarded. The pulp is taken from the hole and tightly pressed between the hands to squeeze out the oil.

Near the funnel-shaped mortar dug in the ground, there is a bench made of two or four forked stakes, graduated in height, over which the natives place large sections of tree bark. The woman throws the pulp from which she has extracted the oil on this bench, spreads it out, and lights a small fire under the wide sections of bark, which serve as drains. Under the influence of the heat, part of the oil remaining in the pulp flows out slowly and is caught in the earthenware vessel placed at the lower end of the drain. Finally, whatever palm oil remains in the pulp is squeezed out by the torsion method. For this purpose, the native has set up a large stationary bar, very strong, to which he attaches one end of a pressing apparatus made of young lianas and fine rattan plaited together. The pulp, still hot, is placed in this press and wrung very tightly to extract every last drop of oil.

The natives collect and keep the palm oil in large pots covered with banana leaves, in calabashes, or, if possible, in imported bottles. Big demijohns stripped of their protective covering are in special demand for this purpose.

We have mentioned above the chief uses the native makes of palm oil in preparing food and the important role it plays in the diet of these primitives. Later we shall have occasion to mention palm oil again when we discuss the role it plays in native body care.

A word now about stimulants. Food in general, particularly meat, is always very strongly seasoned with condiments.

The most widespread stimulant is pili-pili, red pepper. This pepper, the fruit of Capsicum minimum, which is rarely more than one to one and a half centimeters long, is extremely hot. It grows

[Text continues on p. 103]